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Recent Studies on Past and Present

I.

Human Heritage and Community: Archaeology in the Carpathians and Lower Danube Area From Prehistory to the Early Medieval Age

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The analysis of churchyard cemeteries in Transylvania from the 11th–13th centuries

From the pagan cemetery to the Christian churchyard Preliminary results

ERWIN GÁLL

I. Introduction

IN EUROPEAN philosophy, which always tries to achieve certainty, it has been well known since the time of Aristotle that things of different characters or genders are very difficult to connect or to compare. It is possible only to a certain extent. In archaeology it means that historical facts and archaeological data can only be connected if the latter rely on a sound basis, otherwise a vague thing would be used to support uncertain fact that can hardly be connected to it.

In archaeology the term '*gemischte Argumentation*' is used for the method in Romania, (independent of the national identity of the author). It means that when the analysis of archaeological finds or archaeological facts is made, it is supported by the interpretation of other archaeological data or hypotheses, or by historical facts and circumstances, or in some worse cases by historical hypotheses.¹ A very important aim of our research is, apart from the categorisation and analysis of the archaeological data, to point out the *non-scientific* nature of this *mixed argumentation*.

II. Defining space and time

OUR ANALYSIS is focussed on the Transylvanian Basin geographically, chronologically on the 11th – 13th centuries. *Geographically* (and not politically or ethnically) the Transylvanian Basin is completely independent Carpathian Basin. The Basin is the range of the South-East Carpathians and the Transylvanian Alps. It spreads from the Alps of Bucovina, from the Alps of Maramureş, from the valley of the Upper-Tisa, and from the river-head of Suceava river to the valley of the Danube at the Pořile de Fier-Iron Gate. It spreads in a semicircular arch shape. At the western region of this huge geographical unit stands the Transylvanian Range (its Romanian name is Western Alps), and to the south you can find the Alps of Banat. This relief is opened to the west at two places: along the Mureş river at a narrower area, and along the Someş river at a wider area. Besides, the range of the Carpathians is dissected by saddles and gorges in the north-east and in the south as well (eg.: Radna-saddle, Bârgău-saddle, Tulgheş-, Bicaz-, Ghimeş-, Bodza-gorge, Tatar-saddle, a Predeal-gorge, a Bran-saddle, Turnu Roşu-gorge). It should be noted that the width of the Eastern-Carpathians decreases towards south: in the north it is 170 km, at Deda it is 100 km, at Târgu Secuiesc it is 90 km. The 500-1000 m high areas are dominated by beech-woods, the higher mountains by pine-woods, in the lower hills there are mainly oak-woods (Frisnyák 1990, 123–124; Frisnyák 2000, 81–84).

III. The importance of the topic and its data base. From the pagan cemetery to the Christian churchyard

I WOULD LIKE to point out that the subject of my research is in close connection with the research I did in the PhD programme, in which I aimed to track the characteristics of the Transylvanian cemeteries in the 10th and 11th centuries (Gáll 2008, vol. I–III).

III. 1. The 'pagan' cemeteries²

ACCORDING TO their characteristics, the 'pagan' cemeteries dating back to the 10th century and the first quarter of the 11th century show major differences compared to the churchyard cemeteries of a later era. Concerning the areas they cover, they can be lonely graves, cemeteries with a few graves, middle sized cemeteries and big necropolises containing hundreds of graves.³

The cemeteries dating to the 10th century and the first quarter of the 11th century (which allow us to infer the characteristics of the society) vary not just

according to the territories they cover, but their furnishings also show a wide range of varieties, which are represented in thousands of graves excavated in the macroregion of the Carpathian Basin.⁴ In the past 175 years these colourful and diverse finds gave rise to a number of theories on the social classification and way of living of the conquering Hungarians, their trade connections in the 10th–11th centuries and the ethno-cultural issues in the Carpathian Basin.⁵

The diverse size of the cemeteries and the great variety of the furnishings may lead to a conclusion that the social classification of the communities in the 10th century Carpathian Basin must have been more complex, and the cemeteries from the 10th and 11th centuries do not seem to reflect a pyramidal structure. Therefore the problem of *wealthy female* and *poor male graves* can be solved with the Meroving example, so that one can suppose a *hereditary nobility* even back in the 10th century, whose *legal status* was assured, so their representation in the burials was significantly smaller and they cannot be traced archeologically.⁶

According to the written sources, in the 10th century the ‘nomadic’ Hungarian state was led by the so-called hereditary *chiefs*, a term originally used by American cultural anthropology, which was taken over by archeologists. Besides, as a result of the military enterprises and raids, the so called *big man* model could also have existed (Sahlins 1963, 283–303), which means that in the 10th century political-military structure there could be some leaders who did not inherit their position but gained it themselves due to their own achievement, or in the 10th century battle array they did not lead raids as Hungarian people who conquered the Carpathian Basin, but as the members of the conquered population they were placed in a leading position. According to the written records Bogát, who had a Slavonic name, could have been such a leader, which makes it probable that people of Slavonic origin could have taken part in the Bizantyne or western military raids (Kordé 1994, 116). In other words the acculturation and assimilation processes between the Hungarian population, which conquered the Carpathian Basin, and the population of other origin, which had already inhabited the Carpathian Basin, could have happened much faster at least in the case of single people, archeologically in some cases these phenomena can be observed, in other cases not.

Now the problem arises as to how this information, gained from the written sources about the *chiefs* and the *big men*, can be connected to the archeological evidence. In which particular grave can we assume a *chief* and which grave hides a *big man*? In our opinion no final answer can be given to this question as the archeological definition of different social structures is relative because all we can observe archeologically is the distinction between *the wealthy, wealthier, and the poor and poorer graves*. It is dangerous to make assumptions about legal statuses as they are hardly if at all detectable by archaeological means (Steuer 1979, 612; Mesterházy 1998, 25). However, in our opinion the Viking *hird* and the Russian *drujina*, i. e. the military retinue of the political-military centres,

or their counterpart in the Carpathian Basin can be connected to the characteristic burial types in the area researched.

The burial types mentioned in our previous papers are *technical terms* (Gáll 2004–2005, 337–339; Gáll 2008, vol. I. 46–48), the main aim of this categorisation was to classify the excavated cemeteries. Moreover, it is almost impossible to detect any *social classes* by archaeological means, therefore the term ‘*furnishing group*’ was used by us.

In *Plate I-II*, we wanted to illustrate how some particular graves that were found in cemeteries of different categories (i. e. small, middle sized or big), can be connected to one another based upon the furnishings found in the graves and independently of the types and sizes of the cemeteries where they were found. It goes to show that it is not the categorisation of the cemeteries of different sizes that gives us a little insight into the differentiation of the 10th century society, but the comparison and the contextual analysis of the grave furnishings. As it is shown in our chart, similar quantity and quality of furnishings can be found in different sizes of cemeteries (lonely graves, small, middle sized and big cemeteries). The vertical structure of the society is in connection with the horizontal aspects of social issues since these processes were parallel in many cases. If we take the example of Bogát from the written records, it can be seen that in the case of this person the shift of his social status resulted in a change of his cultural identity: a person, who, judging from his name, must have had Slavonic origins, became ‘*Hungarian*’ as a leader of the 10th century Hungarian army. The question arises: how can such phenomena of *acculturation* and *assimilation* be attested by archaeological means with certainty? It also bears high importance to clarify to what extent such *acculturation* and *assimilation* processes went among the population of the Carpathian Basin?

III. 2. Proto-Christian or half-pagan cemeteries?

THE SUBJECT of our research is closely connected to this, both chronologically and geographically (11th – 13th centuries) noting that I hold it very important to distinguish the characteristics of the *transitional period* between these two eras from the 10th century pagan horse-weapon burials, which underwent major changes following the Christianisation in the 11th century, to the churchyard cemeteries, which are characteristic of the medieval Christian funerals. Therefore we would like to make some important observations.

The political-religious and social changes that began in the 10th century became observable in the burials from the first quarter of the 11th century. According to their characteristics they can be considered the necropolises of a ‘*transitional*’ period, so they show archaeological evidence of the more or less fast (mental) social process of conversion to Christianity.⁷ In connection with these necropolises a number of questions may arise. From our research point the most important

of them is: to what extent was the population of the graves Christian or pagan? These necropolises suggest continuity or discontinuity?⁸

Some of these 11th century cemeteries were the direct continuation of 10th century pagan cemeteries without any interruption (e. g. Halimba, Ibrány, Püspökladány, Sárretudvar). Such cemeteries are unknown in the Transylvanian Basin, the 11th century cemeteries had no ‘pagan’ phase (Alba Iulia-Brândușei street, - Vânătorilor street, - Păclișa, Hunedoara, Mănăstur-bustul lui Gheorghe Rákóczi?, Moldovenești) (Gáll 2008, vol. II.). In these cases it can be supposed that one can talk about a christianised population, as these necropolises were found on the territory of the political-religious centres which we know from the written sources, where logically worshippers of the ancient deity were not tolerated. However, some customs clearly lingered on: in Grave 2 in Hunedoara and in one grave in Alba Iulia-Vânătorilor street arrow heads were found, and an arrow head in a destroyed grave in Várfalva is also a faint sign that this tradition was carried on. In these graves the horse-weapon burials, which are characteristic of the 10th century, are missing along with such pagan features as food furnishing intended for the other world (the pottery and animal bones found in the graves indicate this) or in the case of some ethnic groups the inconsistent direction of the graves. In these graves the coins of the first Hungarian kings are attested as oboluses, which were also found in some 10th century graves, although in smaller quantity (Gáll 2004–2005, 369–373). It can be stated that these people began to be converted to Christianity, they may be considered the first generation of official Christians. The considerable amount of jewellery among the finds and some everyday tools (knives, strike-a-lights) may indicate the fact that medieval Christian puritanism was not a characteristic feature of these people. Therefore we think that these necropolises can be called *proto-Christian* as their topographical location and the *oboluses* found in the graves clearly indicate the presence of Christianity.

When analysing these necropolises, another question of social interest arises: what was the status of this population? The classes of *nobility*, *miles* and *servus* are well-known from the laws of Stephen I (ÁKÍF 1999, 52), but it would be impossible or not scientific to connect the population of these cemeteries to any of the social classes known from the written sources based on the topographical-archeological data. In some cases, according to the topographic location of these cemeteries, they could have been the folk of the early castles, whose system was being developed at the beginning of the 11th century (e. g. Mănăstur, Hunedoara, Moldovenești), in other cases they are the cemeteries of the village folk, whose system was built systematically in the 11th century (Alba Iulia-Brândușei street, - Păclișa, Noșlac-Pompa de apă) (Gáll 2010a, 3–43). It can be stated that social structures cannot be researched in these cemeteries, and we do not see the possibility of drawing a more exact picture of populations of

different origins in the Transylvanian Basin in the 11th century based on the burial customs.

III. 3. The symbol of Christianity as an institution in Transylvania: the churchyard cemeteries

MEDIEVAL FUNERAL is closely connected to the religious beliefs of the people of that time, therefore every feature of it is in connection with the theological doctrines of the church or the code of discipline of the church, which was based on it. In the prime of the Middle Ages (12th – 13th centuries) the church was responsible for the funeral of the deceased on its own right. The cemetery, compared to that of the early centuries of Christianity, underwent major changes, the bishop had the right to establish one either out of town or inside it, it was situated near or around the church, but the building of the church could have served the same purpose (Szuromi 2005, 9–10).

This also holds for the type of cemetery appearing in Transylvania in the 11th century, the *'necropolises around the church'*. The characteristics of the *'churchyard cemeteries'* are the existence of the church or its remains and the density of the graves. In many cases we find multiple graves or the superpositions of graves.

Who were buried in these cemeteries? The population of villages, castles (towns) were lying there? Can we suspect different medieval social classes or populations of different origins? Can we find archaeological clues to them in these cemeteries?

Although in the previous era the rank or respect of a deceased person, or the prestige of the family (through the deceased person) was symbolized by different categories of weapons, horse burials and funeral garments adorned with jewellery, from the time of the reign of King Stephen I the Christian conversion of the population in the Carpathian Basin made these ancient pagan rites obsolete. Similarly to the communities of other regions or other ages (from the Palaeolithic age on) the symbolic competition between medieval individuals and families consequently led to a change of the way the status or the social importance of a person was symbolized on their death in the Middle Ages. Christianity, which taught spiritual and, from the point of view of the economic-political hierarchy, an egalitarian picture of the other world⁹ superseded the symbols that represented the status of the individual or the family in the burials,¹⁰ but it allowed another representation. This tendency is very well indicated by Theodulf's decree, which, at the end of the 9th century, emphasises that *bishops, monks and priests* can be buried in the church and, what is most interesting to us, *laymen* who are worthy of it can also be interred there (Szuromi 2005, 10, n. 28). This symbolic *'competition'* of power and wealth meant the same in the case of medieval laymen as the jewels, weapons and/or parts of horses in the burials of the bygone pagan times. In contrast with older days, the poverty

of furnishings doesn't mean the poverty of the society, but the *Puritanism* of medieval way of thinking, which was often dissonant. *Simplicity* and *Puritanism* are the solution to this problem, but the aim to represent power and prestige remained the same and *the burials in the church or as close to the church as it was possible were its manifestations*. That is the reason why overlapping burials and superpositions can be found around the churches, which are the characteristic features of churchyard cemeteries as opposed to the cemeteries with rows of graves.

The best example is the necropolis excavated around the Roman Cathedral, which was dated to the 12th – 13th centuries by the excavating archaeologist.¹¹ According to the published archaeological finds from Graves 3, 9, 13, 50 and 78. (smooth hair-rings, hair-rings with S-shaped ends,¹² bracelets with rhomboid cross-section and spiral ends¹³) the necropolis cannot be dated to the 12th but to the 11th century, at least if we agree with the results of the comprehensive typochronological researches concerning the Carpathian Basin.¹⁴ The wire bracelets, the bracelets with spiral end and those with rhomboid cross-section are dated not later than to the beginning of the 12th century. If one accepts that King Stephen I, following his military expedition to Transylvania, established an episcopate in Alba Iulia, the existence of the recently excavated churchyard cemetery cannot be a surprise. A more precise dating of the level that was called Level 2 by the excavating archaeologist can only be achieved by the ¹⁴C analysis of the skeletons found in the above mentioned graves 3, 9, 13, 50 and 78.¹⁵

The situation is different in the case of churchyard type cemeteries found in other microregions as most of them date from a later time. At the moment our data base from the Transylvanian Basin contains the churchyard type cemeteries in 38 sites and we aim to analyse them with archaeological, anthropological and natural science methods (see *Pl. 3*).

Churchyard cemeteries are known in many sites in the Transylvanian Basin, but mainly from the 12th century on. Although the number of excavations can be considered satisfactory, the extent and the quality of the excavations are far from it not to mention the level of the publications. As far as we know no *anthropological analysis* of these cemeteries with poor furnishings have been carried out let alone the *genetic* and ¹⁴C analyses.

The insignificant researches that have been made so far with quite one-sided methods, only rarely aimed *to collect all the archaeological materials, or to categorise and analyse the burial customs or to represent the parallels of the material culture extensively*.

There is a complete lack of those works that would contain the complete analysis of a cemetery.

Therefore it is an important goal to carry out the categorisation and a critical analysis of the archaeological materials that have been gathered so far. What

kind of conclusions can we draw and what are impossible based upon the cemeteries excavated so far? In the material culture we would like to analyse the changes in fashion as far as it is possible.

One of the methodological characteristics of our research is that it contains the separate analysis of each of the above mentioned 38 sites. With vertical and horizontal statigraphical analyses we would like to find out which cemetery was used before the construction of the church and which were used parallel.

The Mănăstur cemetery, which was discussed in our earlier papers, gives a good example of this: in the first phase it was not a typical churchyard cemetery, it later became one of them. It allows us to suppose that an earlier cemetery, which was started in the 11th century, was continued after the building of the church, in other words a church was built in a proto-Christian cemetery, which was probably sanctified (see *Pl. 4*). It is possible that the same holds for other churchyard cemeteries, but they have not been researched yet.

Among the 38 churchyard cemeteries it would be important to make a statistical analysis of the topographic connection between the church and the cemetery and the characteristics of the cemeteries:

Where was the church situated within the cemetery?

In which cases was the church also used as a burial place and if not, how can this be accounted for?

Geographically and chronologically it can be seen that cemeteries are known in the whole territory of the Basin, from the northern parts to the south-eastern region of Transylvania. Their density does not reflect geographical features but the present stage of research, a deep chronological analysis of these 11th – 13th century cemeteries is an issue that archaeology inevitably has to deal with.

Ethno-cultural issues, the problem of social status and their connection with the churchyard cemeteries

THE CULTURAL identity and ethnic of individuals or communities buried in churchyard cemeteries remains a problematic issue in early medieval studies.¹⁶ Is it possible to detect the different ethnic groups of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Transylvanian Basin based upon the burial customs, in short can this group of sources be used for ethno-cultural analyses? There is another methodological question: is it possible to detect how the *social status*, *position*, the age or genders were illustrated there? Just to make mention of one example: a person of what gender or age could have had the privilege to be buried in the church itself?

The simpler and puritan burial customs from the beginning of the 11th century also meant that the moral judgement, the cultural origin or the social status of the deceased person cannot be seen on the items that were placed in the grave or the rites that were carried out by the family or the micro-community. The customs of the previous era, which were colourful and heterogeneous from an archaeological point of view, were replaced by the Christian doctrines, teaching puritanism and an egalitarian picture of the other world, which resulted that the uniform burial customs hardly make it possible for us to infer the differing cultural or ethnic origins.¹⁷ The origin, commonness, and characteristics of some burial customs are obviously worth studying them, for example:

1. The cultural connections of brick- and stone-cover burials and the question whether those lying in these graves could be members of the social elite

2. The problem/ problems of the graves with head niche.¹⁸

Similarly to the burial customs I emphasise the importance of analysing the finds registered in the '*churchyard cemeteries*' (jewellery, everyday tools). I consider it very important and due because it has already brought positive results: for example the fashion of hair rings with S-shaped ends cannot be dated to an earlier era than the beginning of the 11th century (Gáll 2009, 157–175) and the braided hair rings were still used in the 12th century (they are known even from a 15th century burial in Moldova and Bulgaria). Our research so far has convinced us that it is essential to restrict our chronological researches to microregions (and then to compare the pictures of several smaller regions, within the scope of this topic I tried to analyse different elements of the material culture restricted to the Transylvanian Basin. At the same time the latest achievements of Hungarian numismatology considering the dating of the 12th century denars should also be made use of when the finds from the churchyard cemeteries are analysed.¹⁹

After analysing the above mentioned 38 cemeteries I have drawn up the following chronological chart (Figure 1).

After my preliminary chronological research I drew the following half conclusions:

1. In some cases the '*forerunner*' of the churchyard cemetery could be a cemetery with rows of graves or a proto-Christian cemetery (e. g. Cluj-Mănăştur), whose ground was sanctified.

2. Their dating cannot be connected to the decrees of the synods in *Szabolcs* (1092), *Tarcal* (about 1100) and *Esztergom* (1104–1112/1113), they appeared much earlier. In the case of the above mentioned Alba Iulia cathedral we should consider an earlier dating. The decrees of the synods are the symbols of the victory of Christianity, the development of the religious and state administrations and their institutionalisation. Probably in the early religious administration

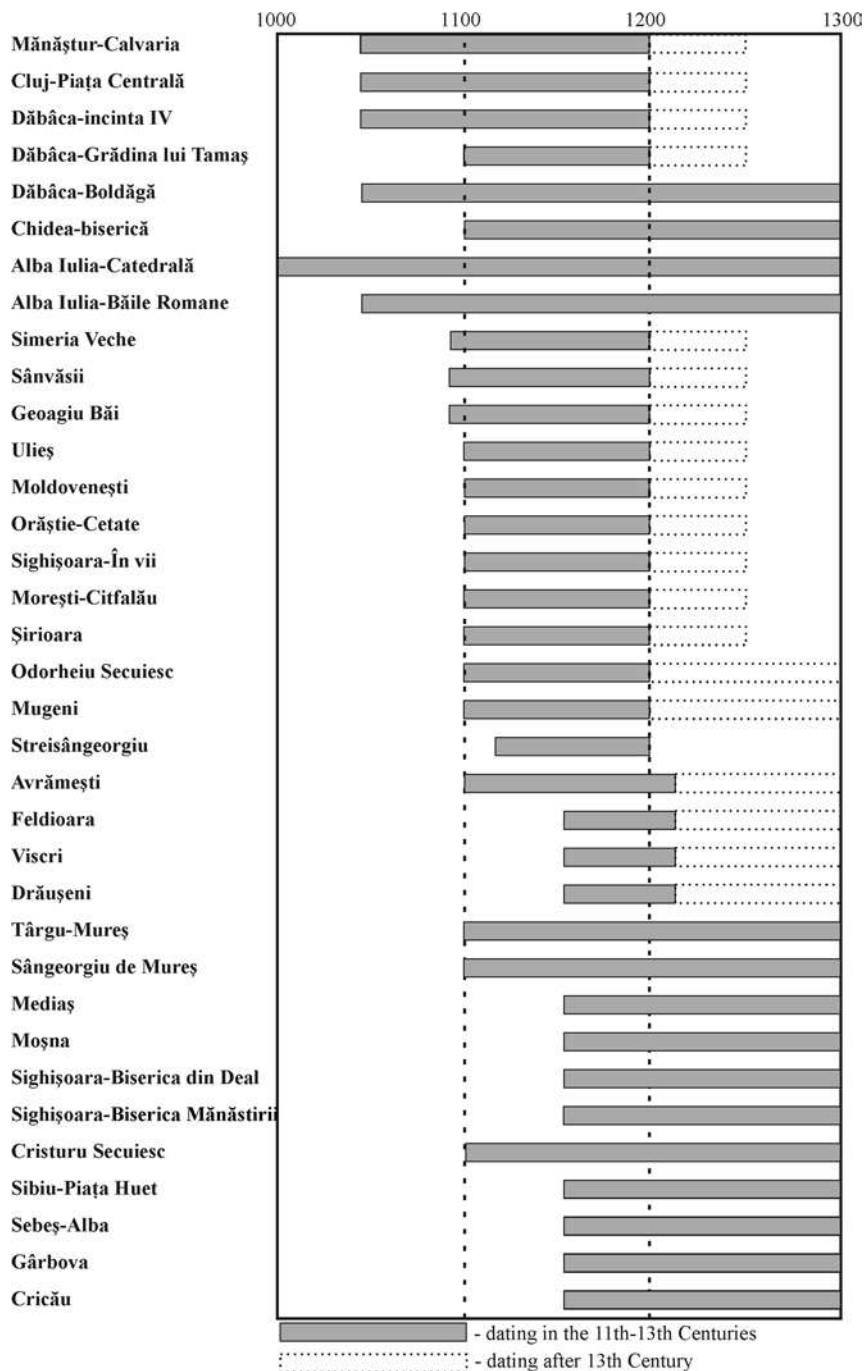


FIGURE 1. Dating of the churchyard cemeteries in the Transylvanian Basin

centres of the kingdom the existence of such cemeteries is not surprising. On the other hand it should be kept in mind that the results of the ^{14}C analysis in the churchyard cemetery in *Szentes Kaján* draws our attention to the importance of the methods of natural sciences in the early medieval archaeology in Romania.

3. *Figure 1* above also shows that in most cases these cemeteries can be dated to the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century, which refers to a close connection with the decrees of the synods. At the beginning of the 12th century the population in the Hungarian Kingdom was not convinced Christian (but neither did they believe in their ancient religion), which is recorded in many sources. So the important fact should be researched in this context that the religious-secular power tied the graves of individuals and those of the communities living in the territory of the kingdom to the symbol of Christianity, the church.

4. There is a wide variety of churchyard cemetery places in the Transylvanian Basin: they were found in religious-administrative centres (Alba Iulia), county centres (Cluj-Mănăştur, Dăbâca-Pl. 5, Moldoveneşti) and in several places in the developing system of towns (Chidea, Steisângeorgiu, etc.).

The churchyard cemeteries from the 11th – 13th centuries that have been found so far can contribute to a fuller understanding of those centuries, mainly with the help of interdisciplinary researches, beginning with the location of the birthplaces of individuals of different origins (so we could get a more exact picture of the demographic migrations in this region) as far as the quality of diet, the change of mentality, the genetic constituency of communities, the connection of man and nature, and its cultural results etc. These would be the great challenges to archaeology, which require such preliminary work as the complete excavation of archaeological sites, and a complex analysis of the bones found there. It would be very interesting to research the churchyard cemeteries of those villages that appeared in written records only later as we have seen it in the case of Chidea, which appears in written sources only in the 14th century, it had already existed in the 12th century. Compared to history, which can only rely on written records, here one can see the almost unlimited possibilities of archaeology. We should take this opportunity.

□

Notes

1. Bálint 1995, 245–248; Brather 2004. The term was first used by Joachim Werner.
2. The terminology '*pagan*' can only be used from a Christian point of view. We used it in a comparative sense when comparing the the burial sites and customs of the 10th century with those of the 11th – 13th centuries.

3. A similar feature was observed by Kiefer Olsen in the comparison of the characteristics of the pagan cemeteries and those of the churchyard cemeteries in Scandinavia. See: Kiefer-Olsen 1997, 186.
4. The research of the Hungarian Conquest has a long history in Central-Eastern Europe. The first grave was excavated by Miklós Jankovich in 1834, which he published in the following year and dated it to the 10th century based on the coins of Berengar found in the grave. Moreover, he connected them to the Hungarians who had raided Italy. Approximately 27.000 graves have been excavated up to this date.
5. On the history of the research of this issue and the works and conceptions of the most important researchers, see: Langó 2007, 61–135. On the importance of the contribution of Gyula Kisléghi Nagy, see: Gáll 2010b, 13–14.
6. Such cemeteries with a small number of graves with rich female and poor male furnishings were found in the Great Plain (the middle part of present day Hungary and the western part of Romania): Galoşpetreu, Szeged-Bojárhalom, Teremia Mare, etc. For this question, see: Gáll 2010a, 3–43.
7. To give a comparison, in Poland horse-weapon burials, which refer to pagan mentality, are to be observed up to the mid-12th century. On this see: Jażdżewski 1949, 179; Gassovski 1950, 176; Miękiewicz 1969, 300. As opposed to this, weapon burials are considered extremely rare in the Carpathian Basin in the 11th century. A few weapon burials have been registered from the 11th century. The list of them is given in: Révész 1997, 169–195.
8. Before approaching a very problematic issue (deriving from the sentimentalism typical to the romantic age of the nineteenth century and the national-communist times), that of *continuities* and *discontinuities* in the material culture and funerary rituals, one must first settle the theoretical benchmarks of these notions, stating what we understand by continuity and discontinuity and when can they be used.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, just as in the twentieth century, historians believed it was possible to trace in a linear fashion cultural continuity until the most ancient times and that through this scientific method (sic!) it was possible to trace the history of a people down to its roots (it was not very clearly argued, but they must have envisaged the biological roots).

We can thus state that they believed in a linear historical evolution most clearly indicated by language, equating languages and peoples.

In fact, such terms of continuity and discontinuity do not exist. Absolute cultural and demographic discontinuities cannot be traced. This would be very unusual case.

The phenomena of continuity and discontinuity can be followed in parallel in one and the same period and area. Which of the two receives more attention depends entirely on the specialist making the analysis.

The concept of continuity cannot explain anything. It is in fact a relative (sentimental?) position towards an issue. Sebastian Brather noted that „... *ethnic identity can be preserved through cultural discontinuities and there are cultural continuities in the case of ethnical ruptures.*” Starting from this statement, it becomes clear that cultural continuity (archaeological materials) alone cannot lead to conclusions about ethnical continuity. Brather 2004, 537–538; Csányi et. al. 2008, 519–534.

9. On the Christian picture of the other world and on Christian burials, see: Rush 1941.
10. It is very interesting that *sword* or *sabre* burials became fashionable again from the 16th century on, especially inside church. The question arises: can we talk about the spreading of paganism again? In this issue see the excavation of Pósta Béla, Roska Márton and Kovács István in Alba Iulia, which was carried out very well (Pósta 1917, 1–155). A same phenomenon are known from Scandinavia (Kiefer-Ollsen 1997, 188, note 17).
11. According to Dana Marcu Istrate it is level M2. Marcu Istrate 2008, 110.
12. An analysis of the hair-rings in the Transylvanian Basin, the Partium and the Banat, see: Gáll 2008, vol. I. 121–156. Although in the Alba Iulia necropolis there are a lot of smooth hair-rings dating to an earlier period, which gives rise to suspicion.
13. An analysis of the bracelets in the Transylvanian Basin, the Partium and the Banat, see: Gáll 2008, vol. I. 186–204.
14. *Braided bracelet with spiral end*: Giesler 1981, 88–90, 120–121; Révész 1996, 92; *on the analysis of bracelets with rhomboid cross-section* see: Giesler 1981, 120.
15. The grave which was said to belong to ‘Level M2-a’ also belongs to Level M2 as similarly to the hair-rings with S-shaped ends the brick and stone-cover burials are also dated to the 11th century earliest, in the Transylvanian Basin, see: Gáll 2009, 157–176; Pap 2002, 177–194.
16. In the question of ethnos Hungarian and Romanian archaeology haven’t contributed with any original ideas, mostly they took over the results of western studies and applied them in different historical contexts. The name of Jenő Szűcs is worth mentioning, who expressed original ideas, although in a traditional way, about the ethnogenesis of the Hungarian people. Szűcs 1997; Curta 2002, 5–25; Bálint 2006, 277–347; Lăzărescu 2008, 55–77.
17. It is worth mentioning the words of Dušan Čaplovič in connection with the ethnic issues in the early Hungarian Kingdom: „*It is indisputable that the history of both Slovaks and Hungarians is a part of the Old-Hungarian history (11–15/16th century) in which the Slovenes-Slovaks of Central Europe established themselves as an important community (through its elites) took part in the construction of the Hungarian Kingdom.*” Čaplovič 2000, 156.
18. More than half a decade ago our colleague, Adrian Ioniță thought he could distinguish certain ethnic characters in the graves with head niches in southern Transylvania, i. e. He considered them to have been the burials of Germanic people moving into Transylvania, so he tried to prove uncertain data with archaeological evidence whose connection with the data was also uncertain (no cemetery has been excavated completely). Ioniță supposed that the origin of a person, based on the furnishings or the burial customs, reflects ‘*cultural processes*’ in the grave.

Apart from Ioniță’s analysis and methodology, his main weakness is the data from the Carpathian Basin cited by him: it is a well-known fact that in the 11th century there was a considerable Germanic influx into the Hungarian Kingdom, mainly to the Transdanubian region, however no cemetery has been documented from this century. In the case of Eger in northern Hungary, which was mentioned by Ioniță, we know nothing of any German speaking inhabitants, in the case of the Kaposvár cemetery there is nothing else to prove the Germanic origin of the

inhabitants. The finds in the two cemeteries are typical of the 12th century, and these were the two cemeteries which István Bóna mentioned in 1978, when he talked about the classic material culture of the Hungarian Kingdom in the 12th century.

The fact that head niche burials have only been found in southern Transylvania is not a strong argument to prove their distinctive ethnic origin, as in northern Transylvania no one has made such exact observations as Radu Popa, Adrian Ioniță (Feldioara) or Radu Harhoiu and Gheorghe Baltag (Sighișoara-Dealul Viilor) except István Méri, who carried out a perfect excavation in 1944, in Cluj. One good example of this is the cemetery of region 4 in the Doboka castle area: 490 graves have been excavated but in none of the cases has the shape of the grave been recorded. Although it is known from written records that a German population moved to Cluj too, but in the precise documentation made by István Méri no head niche grave can be found in the cemetery in the Main Square.

I don't dispute that this custom came from the west, or that the German population moving in did not know this custom, but I am sceptical about the theory that it was given an ethnic content and was considered the historical–archeological sign of the German migration by my București colleague and good friend.

It is also important to note that this custom caught on in Scandinavia in the 12th century, the Transdanubian and Transylvanian examples are also dated to the 12th century, although we know that in the western part of Hungary there had been a German population from the beginning of the 11th century. Then the question arises: can this custom be connected to a 12th century burial fad rather than to migration? Bárdos 1978, 194; Bóna 1978, 140–141; Binnford 1962, 222; Ioniță et. al. 2004, 43–46.

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Abstract

The analysis of churchyard cemeteries in Transylvania from the 11th–13th centuries.
From the pagan cemetery to the Christian churchyard
Preliminary results

The most important goals of my article are to present the fundamental religious, mental, political and social changes in Transylvanian Basin in the 11–13th Centuries, the process of transition from ‘paganism’ to Christianity in the light of burial customs: from the *pagan cemetery* (with a wide range of varieties: weapon, pottery for food and drink in the graves, horse parts, which symbolized the rank or respect of a deceased person, or the prestige of the family – through the deceased person), the *transitional period cemetery* (without horse-weapon burials, but some everyday tools (knives, strike-a-lights) may indicate the fact that medieval Christian Puritanism was not a characteristic feature of these people) to the *Christian churchyard*. The characteristics of the ‘*churchyard cemeteries*’ are the existence of the church or its remains and the density of the graves, with poor furnishing. In many cases we find multiple graves or the superposition of graves. Although in the previous era the rank or respect of a deceased person, or the prestige of the family (through the deceased person) was symbolized by different categories of weapons, horse burials and funeral garments adorned with jewellery, in the churchyard the family prestige was symbolized by the *place of the graves*. This tendency is very well indicated by Theodulf’s decree, which, at the end of the 9th century, emphasised that *bishops*, *monks* and *priests* can be buried in the *church* and, what is most interesting to us, *laymen* who are worthy of it can also be interred there. This symbolic ‘*competition*’ of power and wealth meant the same in the case of medieval laymen as the jewels, weapons and/or parts of horses in the burials of the bygone pagan times. Churchyard cemeteries are known in many sites in the Transylvanian Basin, but mainly from the 12th century on. Nevertheless we know few cemeteries, which can be dated in the first half (Alba Iulia-Catedrală), or the second half of the 11th Century (Cluj-Mănăştur). As a conclusion, I want to point out that dating of the ‘churchyard’ from the Transylvanian Basin cannot be connected to the decrees of the synods in *Szabolcs* (1092), *Tarcal* (about 1100) and *Esztergom* (1104–1112/1113). They appeared much earlier, and a very important aim of our research is, apart from the categorisation and analysis of the archaeological data, to point out the *non-scientific* nature of this *mixed argumentation*.

Keywords

Transylvanian Basin, pagan cemetery, Christian churchyard

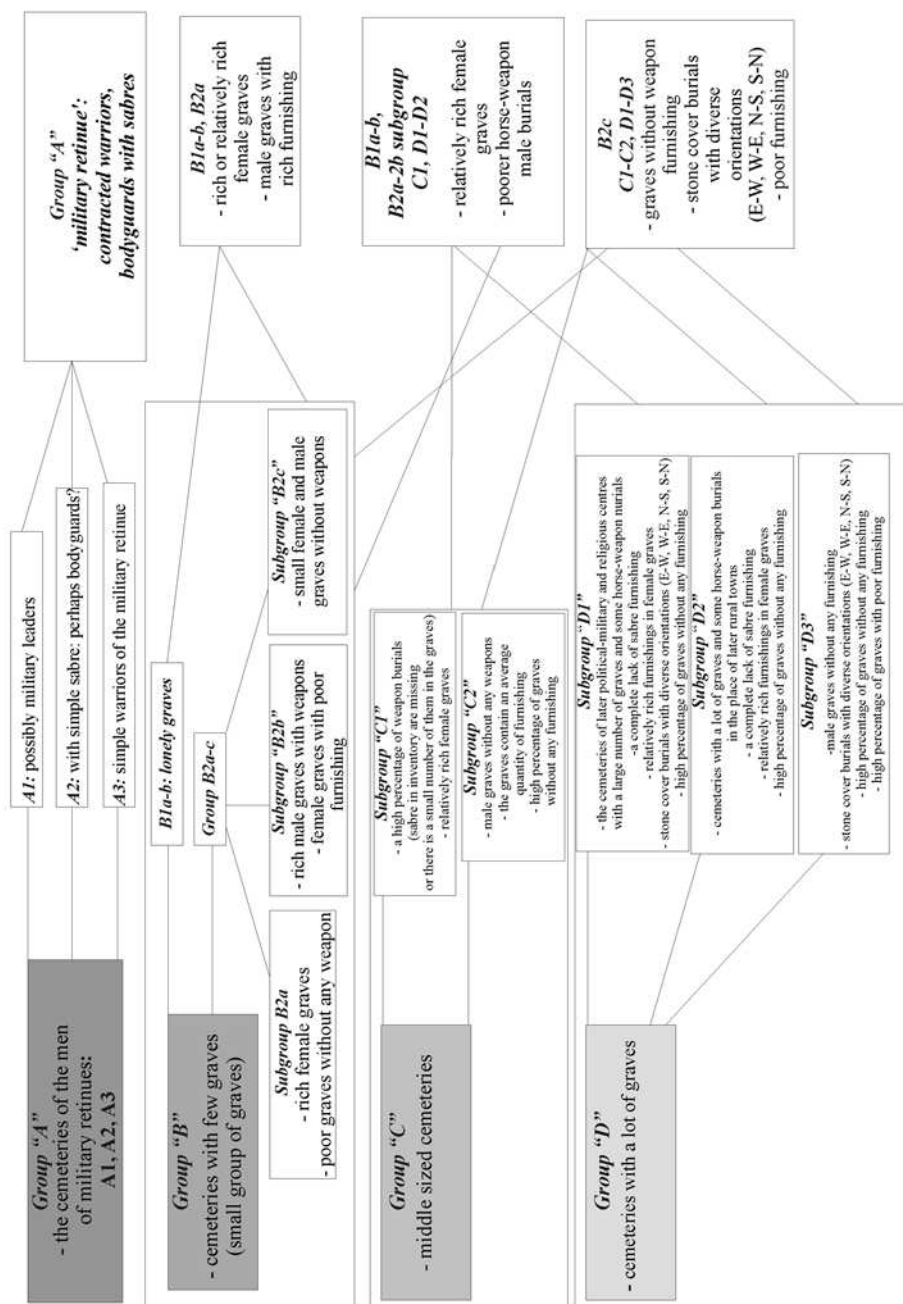


Plate 1. The relationship system of the grave furnishings found in different kind and sized necropolises

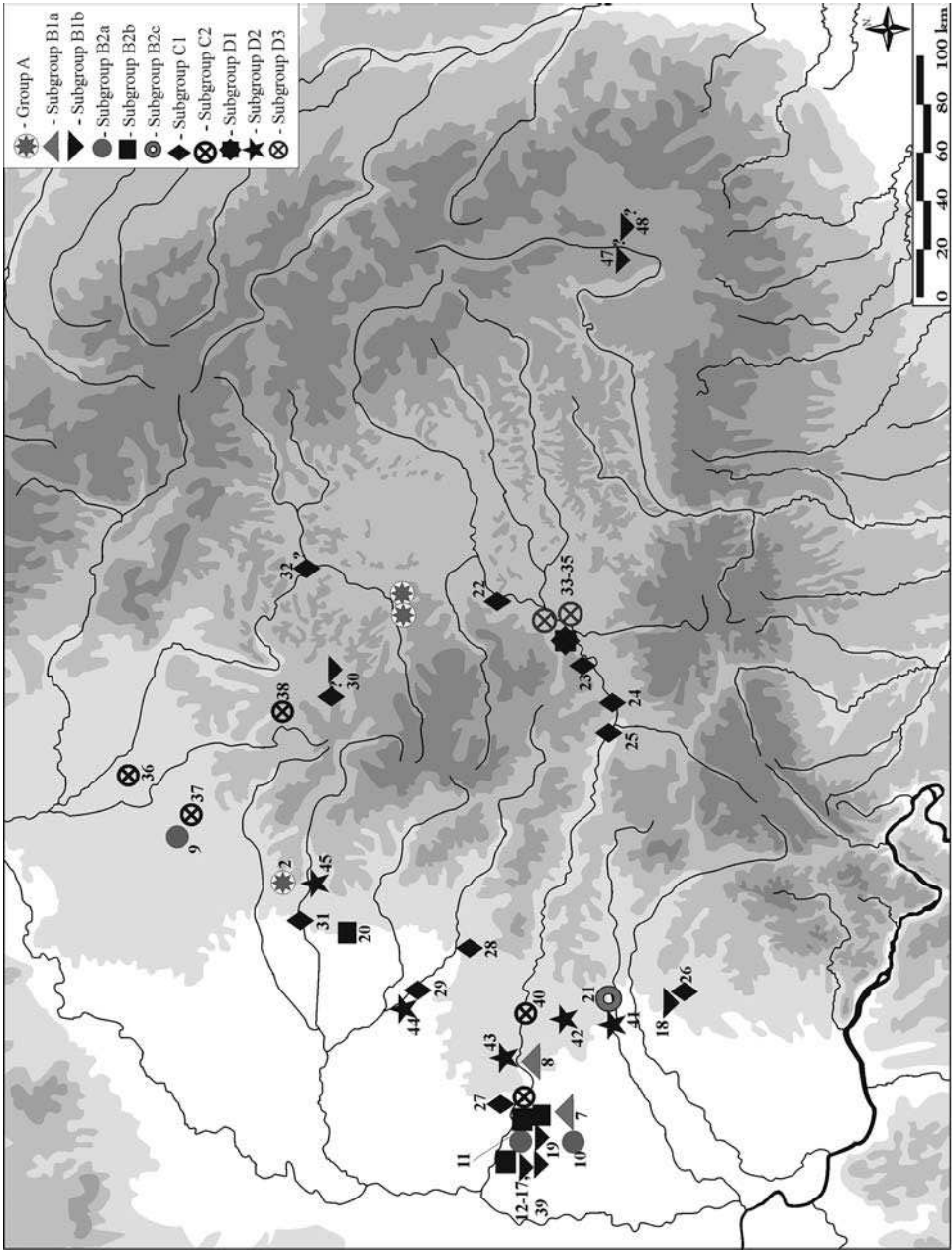


Plate 2. Furnishing subgroups in the necropolises dating in the 10th and the first half of the 11th Century (after Gall 2008, Map 69)

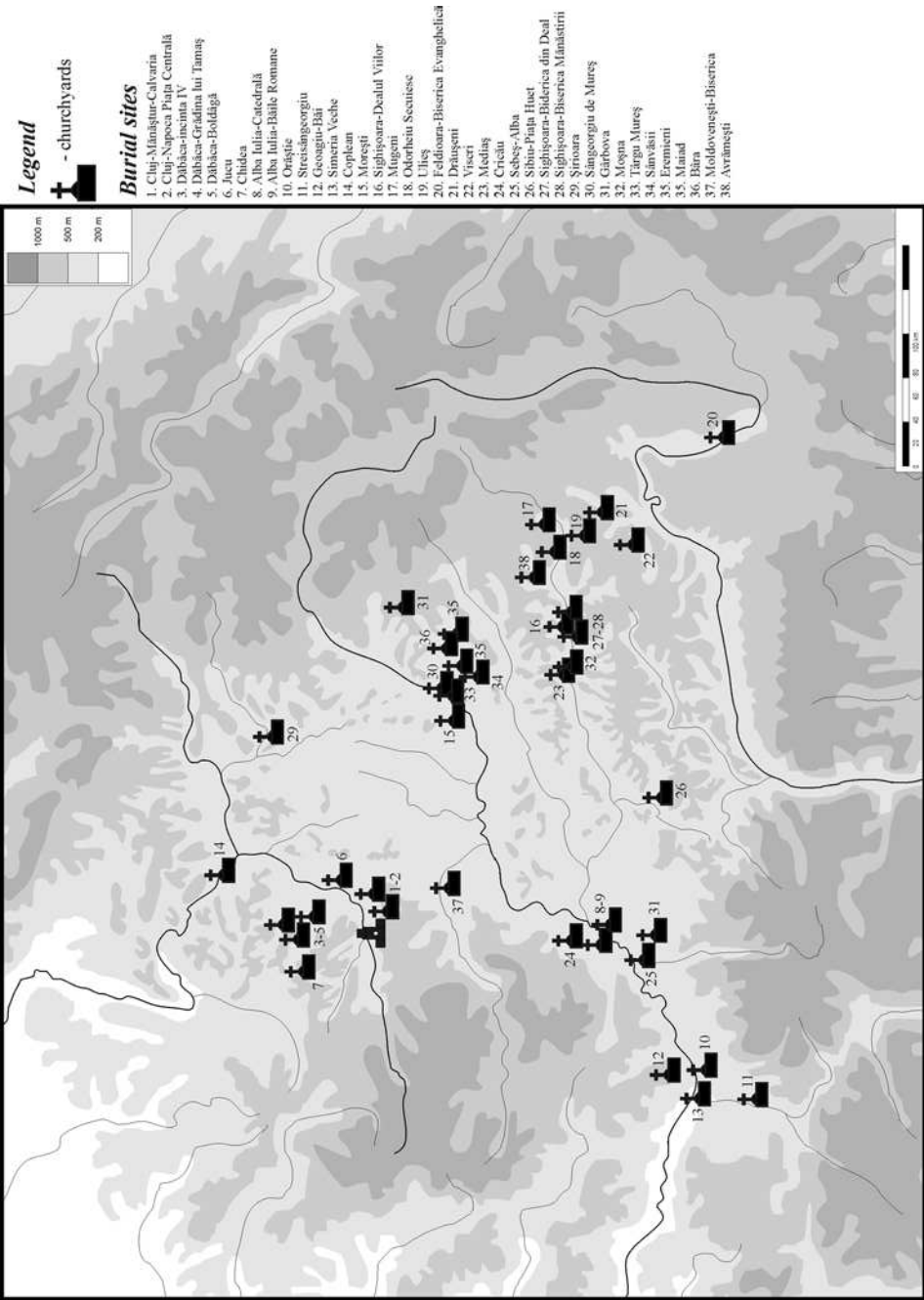


Plate 3. Churchyard cemeteries in the Transylvanian Basin in the 11th -13th centuries

